

THE SEWER AND THE BANQUETING-HOUSE.

In matters of construction I think you must be the proper person to address; and although what I am about to complain of has more the character of destruction, I shall pursue my intention. Taking a stroll, Sir, to enjoy the fresh air, along the banks of the Thames, at Hampton-court Palace, and stopping to contemplate Cardinal Wolsey's "Banqueting-house," with its sly little door opening on the towing-path, I was at once assailed by the most offensive effluvia that any one can imagine, and inquiring, evidently of an old inhabitant of the place, whence it emanated, was informed that not 20 yards from where we stood the common sewer of the palace emptied its contents on to the open bank of the river! and this is about the middle of the side of the palace! And inquiring further, whether from any tradition it was supposed the old cardinal had built his banqueting-house so detached from the palace from any odd fancy he might have had the nearer to inhale such a loathsome (that is, to me) and noxious atmosphere, the reply was, No, and that, indeed in the olden time, folks were not such fools; that the former sewer discharged itself at the back of the entrance to the barrack-yard, and was done away with, and the present one substituted but some few years ago, which emitted actually sufficient filthy exhalation to have poisoned the whole side of the palace; and if any poor devil inhabit this sweet banqueting-house, I would seriously advise them to make their wills. Can it be conceived that any architect would not have imagined the obnoxiousness of such an exit so situated, and that he would have carried a covered sewer far enough away from the numbers who are now necessarily exposed to this horrid nuisance, and have formed the exit where but few, if any, might be disgusted and endangered?

MADOC'S.

ENGINEERING AND OTHER INTELLIGENCE FROM IRELAND.

The Board of Guardians of the Tipperary Union have determined upon the erection of an addition to the front building of the workhouse, the drawings to be furnished by the Poor Law Commissioners' architect.

An additional wing is to be erected to Westford jail, and £2,000. to be expended thereon.

The Board of Guardians of the Listowel Union have, we understand, received from the Treasury the sum of £400. to erect additional buildings to the workhouse.

The several works consisting of the cutting of the large hill at the town of Banbridge, the hills upon the Belfast and Ballynahinch road, the new post-road from the Quoile-bridge, towards Killyleagh, &c. are in an advanced state, and will probably be completed this season. Important works are to be executed in the county Down, and the improvements upon the Banbridge and Scarva roads are to be continued: the expense will be 3,965l. 14s. The Roscommon hills on the Downpatrick and Ballynahinch-road, are to be lowered at an expense of about 1600l. A new line of road commencing near Hollymount Church, at Locale, and ending near the post road at Lisneman, is to be made at an expense of 990l. The amount of applications which have been allowed for public purposes in this locality is 16,444l. 15s. The gross amount on the county will be nearly 21,000l. Mr. John Fraser, Company's surveyor.

A new bank has just been completed in Drogheda by the Belfast Banking Company.

The foundation stone of a new Roman Catholic Church has been laid at Derry by the bishop.

The Poor Law Commissioners intend erecting an additional wing to the front house of Thurles workhouse, and proposals are being received for the execution of the works, according to the plans, &c. of their architect.

A line of railway is to be constructed from King-street in Cork, to the town of Youghal, passing through Middleton, with a branch line to Quay-street. The Bill has received the royal assent.

A monument has been lately fixed in Rathfarnham Cathedral to the memory of the late Rev. Wm. A. Butler: the design and execution are by Mr. Kirk, sculptor, of Dublin. Two blocks support a roll and masonry plinth, on which is a reading-desk, with a cushion, and an open book, representing the Holy Bible: behind is a slab of plain white marble, surmounted by a pediment, on which is a Grecian honeysuckle. A piece of flowing drapery partly covering the pediment, falls in folds at either side of the tablet. The whole is bordered with black marble.

In Dublin the building trade is at present in a flourishing state. An opposition monster house is being erected in Mary-street. The extensive firm of Messrs. Carmock, White, and Co. have added the building lately occupied as a police office, to their establishment. A fifth story is being erected. Throughout the city the shop architecture is considerably improving. In the locality of Rathinuss and Rathgar there is quite a building mania. A new road is in course of construction at the termination of Castlewood Avenue, and first and second class terraces are being erected. The new Roman Catholic Church at Rathinuss (which we fully described some time since) is progressing but slowly—the original design has been much altered.

The masons and stonecutters employed at the Craigmore viaduct, Messrs. Rillen and Moore, contractors, in receipt of from 21s. to 30s. per week, have struck for higher wages.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS.

SECOND LETTER.

Of late years a highly objectionable and not a little injurious practice has been gaining ground: namely, that of inviting architects to send in designs for buildings of no moment whatever, such invitations being generally accompanied with the offer of some miserably paltry premium, which sometimes, as is, perhaps, honestly enough hinted, is all that the successful (?) candidate has to look forward to. A case of the kind is now pending: some speculator who is about to erect a series of houses, which are to be built in pairs or blocks consisting of a larger and smaller one together, has hit upon the following device for obtaining a choice of designs for them at a merely nominal cost. He coolly advertises for designs for "two houses," and in "the particulars" demands from each competitor the following drawings:—A front elevation in two different styles, which is equivalent to two distinct designs, at any rate requires two drawings; a back elevation, a side ditto; plans of each floor; a section; and lastly, drawings of some of the principal details, including "Venetian windows," which last would seem to fix the style, and leave choice for no other than what such features would accord with. There are, then, about ten drawings to be supplied for ten pounds!—or rather, not for ten pounds certain, but for the mere chance of winning that magnificent sum. Why it was not called two hundred shillings, as that would have sounded more magnificently still. The fact itself, however, is no joking matter, it being merely a grievance peculiar to the architectural profession, that they should be expected and induced to send in goods for approbation, which they must first manufacture for the especial purpose. Actual compulsion to send in drawings there certainly is not; but there may be the compulsion of circumstances, of which advantage is taken by those who have found out that by getting up a little hole-and-corner competition of the kind they can obtain an abundant choice of designs—choice ones is quite a different matter—for much less than they would have the face to go and offer to any individual in the profession. As regards the practice itself, it is of no use for one here and there to hold out against it, so long as others, who either are unable to do so or are less scrupulous, comply with it. And unfortunately the practice is one which tends to lower the art itself as well as its followers.

Architectural competitions on occasions do indeed do much to raise the public interest in them can confer no distinction, are to

be deprecated if only because they invite mediocrity rather than talent; and, owing to the complete secrecy with which they are conducted, there is not the slightest check upon the most arbitrary, if not actually fraudulent, proceedings also. All such petty, trumpery, and-discard competitions ought to be put down. Let competition be resorted to only upon important and extraordinary occasions, where a prize really worth struggling for is held out, and opportunity is afforded for the display of superior taste and ability. Nor would it be impossible to provide what would operate as a wholesome check upon the sort of competitions which are now so rife.

When a difficulty proves of such Gordian-knot quality as to puzzle almost the cleverest to untie it, nothing remains to be done but to cut it through. So let the Institute get their noble president to bring a Bill into Parliament for the better regulation of architectural competitions. The matter is surely of sufficient importance to justify legislative interference quite as much as many others. Let an Act then be passed, making it illegal to get up what is called a competition, and invite architects generally to send in designs, unless the whole proceedings be conducted with the utmost publicity—unless there be not only an exhibition, but a *pre-exhibition*, of all the drawings—unless newspaper reporters be allowed to attend the discussions—at any rate, what are the sittings of the committee—and unless the names of those who constitute such committee, or who act in the capacity of judges or umpires, be published. "Be it further enacted that every member of any such committee do give his reasons distinctly for his decision or choice." That were a consummation most devoutly to be wished. Good-bye, then, to the ballot-box and all silent votes; good-bye then to the curtain and to all the juggling doings behind it. Instead of thrusting themselves forward, the ignorant and incompetent would hold back, and be especially shy of accepting an office and authority which would render themselves amenable to the authority of public opinion. Let each individual of a committee, or whatever else it may happen to be called, stand fairly upon his own bottom, and be responsible for his own opinion and vote. At all events, responsibility, of which there is none whatever at present, would then be enforced, and responsibility would cause people to think twice before they acted once.

That such legislative enactment would be equivalent to a positive prohibition of all the petty schemes for obtaining designs at a minimum of cost—at a cost that would hardly pay for the paper alone of the drawings which are sent in—is almost self-evident.

Let us give three cheers, then, for Earl de Grey and the competition Bill. ZETA.

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

THE late accidents in and near tunnels have at length induced directors to take some necessary precautions against their recurrence. On the Great Northern line underground telegraphs are now being laid through the several tunnels, so as to enable the man stationed at one end to communicate with the man at the other end, when a train goes in or comes out of the tunnel. It is intended that no second train shall be allowed, under any circumstances, to enter a tunnel until a communication is made that the first train has passed out. Henley's magneto-electric instruments are to be used.—A new railway to connect Bedford with the Great Northern and Eastern districts, 7½ miles long, is proposed to run from Bedford into the Great Northern at Sandy: at a meeting just held at Bedford, resolutions were passed to promote it.—The gross receipts of railway traffic for the week before last upon all the lines in operation, have amounted to 350,687l. on 6,293 miles of line. The total receipts since the 1st July last have been 2,366,310l., against 1,990,876l. to corresponding period of last year.—We might very profitably take a leaf out of the American book in regard to the construction and working of our railways, especially in relation to branch lines. Only think!—they have con-